



**Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee
Erin Chiaro, Director of Financial Aid
University of New Haven
February 15, 2023**

On behalf of the University of New Haven, I am submitting testimony on **H.B. 6659: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**, pertaining to funding for the **Roberta Willis Scholarship Program**. Governor Lamont has proposed to increase funding for this program \$4 million, 12%, in both FY 24 and FY 25.

By way of background, the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program is the state's need-based financial aid program administered by the Office of Higher Education that provides scholarships to needy Connecticut students to attend Connecticut institutions both public and private. Students attending independent colleges receive approximately 17% of the total funding from this program.

The appropriation for this program has been flat for over ten years and therefore we strongly support the Governor's proposed increase.

The Roberta Willis Scholarship Program is a critical component of the financial support that University of New Haven students receive, supplementing their aid from the federal government and from the University itself.

The University of New Haven has 333 students in the current award year that received a total of \$621,525 from the Roberta Willis Scholarship fund which has been instrumental in assisting our Connecticut students stay enrolled and work towards their degrees.

Of note, the University of New Haven must express some concern about the CSU's proposal to make certain 4-year in demand degrees free through an expansion of the PACT program to the Connecticut State Universities. The University of New Haven would be severely impacted if the state were to provide funding to make one sector free. The University of New Haven enrolls a large percentage of Connecticut students and those students can be found working in state after graduation at the same rate as CSU graduates.

In summary, we hope the Committee will support the Governor's proposal to increase funding to the Roberta Willis Scholarship Program and we hope that any additional funding to expand the pipeline for certain in-demand degrees such as teaching, nursing and engineering/manufacturing will include opportunities for students to attend both public and private, non-profit colleges in Connecticut.